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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KINGSTON 001611

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAR (BENT) AND WHA/PPC (PUCETTI)
DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP (OWEN) AND (ETERNO)
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD AND J7

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [OPRC](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [JM](#) [TIP](#)

SUBJECT: A DEFENSIVE NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTER HOSTS TIP
MEETING

REF: A. STATE 097853

[1](#)B. KINGSTON 001444

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) On June 24, at the request of National Security Minister Peter Phillips, Charge, USAID Mission Director, and Poloff (notetaker) attended a meeting hosted by Phillips on the subject of trafficking in persons (TIP) at the Ministry of National Security (MNS). Unfortunately, Phillips used the opportunity to criticize the 2005 TIP Report and Jamaica's downgrade to Tier 3, and to lament what he disingenuously termed an unfortunate failure to communicate between Post and the GOJ. Phillips then presented actions taken to date by the GOJ to combat trafficking, and asked to know definitively what further steps would be required for Jamaica to receive a "passing grade" and avoid Tier 3 sanctions. The GOJ also promised working-level engagement with Post on TIP as soon as possible. End Summary.

Phillips Criticizes US for Poor Communication...

[1](#)2. (U) On June 24, Charge, USAID Mission Director, and Poloff (notetaker) attended a meeting at the Ministry of National Security at the request of National Security Minister Peter Phillips. Joining Phillips in the 90-minute meeting were approximately fifteen GOJ representatives, including Gilbert Scott, Permanent Secretary, MNS; Woodrow Smith, Principal Director, MNS; Ann-Marie Bonner, Principal Director, Policy Analysis and Planning Unit, Office of the Cabinet; Gladys Young, Attorney General's Chambers, Ministry of Justice; Allison Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, Child Development Agency; George Williams, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF); Raymond Wolf, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT), and Pamela Ingleton, Acting Deputy Director, International Organizations Department, MFAFT. Reporters from the Jamaica Information Service appeared before and after the meeting with photo and video equipment; as Phillips clearly intended, the meeting received prominent coverage in the weekend news.

[1](#)3. (U) Phillips devoted the early part of the meeting to lamenting Jamaica's downgrade to Tier 3 status in the 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report (Ref A). Specifically, he expressed dismay that he had not been personally notified earlier of the trafficking issue and the potential for a downgrade to Tier 3. Phillips described as "unfortunate" the lack of communication between Post and the GOJ "at the political level." Phillips asserted that his first exposure to the trafficking issue and the implications of a downgrade came from "junior" levels within the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF). (Comment: In fact, only after Charge and Pol/Econ repeatedly found MNS, Finance Ministry, and other GOJ interlocutors unresponsive as the April 30 TIP final update deadline approached, did Post's Military Liaison Office raise the issue of trafficking and the implications of a downgrade at a previously scheduled meeting with the JDF. Though Phillips may have resented hearing the message from "junior" JDF colleagues, the JDF deserve credit for appreciating the stakes and attempting to focus Phillips on addressing it. End comment.) He conceded only briefly that poor internal communication within the GOJ may have been partly to blame. Charge replied that Post had made several attempts to contact senior GOJ officials, including Finance Minister Omar Davies, to discuss trafficking and the 2005 TIP Report. Phillips insisted that Charge should have called him directly, given the "ease and regularity" with which they normally communicate.

...And Lack of Specific Evidence

14. (U) Phillips went on to challenge the 2005 TIP Report for what he said was its lack of specificity. Pursuing a line of criticism that has been common in the Jamaican media since the public release of the report on June 3, Phillips demanded "more detail" and evidence on the areas of USG concern, including the internal trafficking of children, outlined in the report. He added that the GOJ would also like more information on how it should respond to the proposed USG action plan, and asked how Jamaica was expected to "pass the exam" without knowing "what the passing mark is." Concluding approximately 15 minutes of opening remarks, Phillips added that Jamaica has always taken child's rights seriously, and that "if there is anything we can do, we want to do so."

GOJ Working Toward a Passing Grade

15. (U) Responding to Phillips' question on how to "pass the exam," Poloff explained that the GOJ's anti-trafficking efforts would be evaluated according to the Trafficking Victim Protection Act of 2003, which broadly seeks "serious and sustained efforts" in the areas of prosecution, protection, and prevention. Poloff added that the Tier 3 Action Plan delivered to the Foreign Ministry on June 2 contained specific suggestions for action within each of those three areas. For clarification of a concept that appears to remain unclear in the media, Poloff pointed out that any child involved in commercial sex is, by definition, a trafficking victim, and that this area was of particular concern to the Department. Phillips took the opportunity to ask ACP George Williams of the JCF and Allison Anderson of the Child Development Agency to comment on whether they had found any evidence of child trafficking victims in Jamaica. Both replied that they had not. Williams explained that JCF officers had investigated a well-known "sex market" in Culloden, Westmoreland, where many young women are known to be recruited to work in nightclubs, but had found all of the eighty people present to be "adults." He added that no minors had been found at other targeted locations. Anderson contributed that she was unaware of any specific cases of trafficking, though she added that her agency regularly encountered children who were victims of abuse and exploitation.

16. (U) Ann-Marie Bonner, Principal Director of Policy Analysis and Planning, Office of the Cabinet, circulated two documents for review. The first was a three-page "Plan of Action," which documented nine "actions taken," eight items planned for "short term action," and 11 further steps for "long term action" to address trafficking in Jamaica. In addition to these actions, Phillips pointed out that the GOJ had undertaken a review of Jamaican laws to determine which legislation could be used in the fight against trafficking. The second document that was circulated outlined the six pieces of legislation that had been identified, including the Child Care and Protection Act, Offenses Against the Person Act, Foreign Nationals and Commonwealth Citizens Act, Aliens Act, Labor Officers Act, and Recruiting of Workers Act.

GOJ Seeking International Assistance to Combat Trafficking

17. (U) Following a brief review by the group of the two GOJ documents, it was agreed that a follow-up meeting should be scheduled to discuss anti-TIP progress. Phillips stressed that the actions being taken by the GOJ to fight trafficking are a "reflection of our own standards as a country," and that relegation to Tier 3 status is reflecting badly on Jamaica. He hoped, he said, that the USG appreciated the magnitude of the Tier 3 rating, and repeated that he would have liked to receive news of the downgrade before it happened. He went on to call the report and its findings "untrue, unfair, and unjust in the absence of detailed information." Before adjourning the meeting, Phillips pointed out that the GOJ had held recent meetings on the subject of trafficking with three United Nations agencies - UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA - and had made a request to the Inter-American Development Bank for assistance in developing anti-trafficking programs.

Comment

18. (SBU) With three weeks remaining until the July 14-15 visit of G/TIP representatives to Kingston, Post had grown concerned by the lack of communication from the GOJ on trafficking since the release of the TIP report, and was pleased to receive Phillips' invitation to discuss the issue. However, the presence of media, the size of the team that Phillips had assembled (a total of 15 GOJ officials), and his opening monologue set an unfortunate tone for the meeting. Phillips aspires to become Jamaica's next prime minister, and his campaign's biggest liability is the country's spiraling

murder rate for which he as National Security Minister receives much criticism. Evidently, Phillips has calculated that he cannot also afford to take the blame for Jamaica's downgrade to Tier 3 despite his Ministry's sustained non-responsiveness to repeated Embassy outreach efforts and, eventually, warnings on TIP.

19. (SBU) Comment (cont'd): The Minister's assertion that he was taken by surprise by the downgrade is patently untrue, and he used the meeting to save face in front of his team and to give himself political cover in the media. Indeed, in a brief private conversation with Charge following the June 24 meeting, Phillips essentially admitted that his remarks were disingenuous, conceding that he had been kept out of the loop on this issue by his own government. We note further that, at a May 31 meeting with Charge to discuss the imminent release of the 2005 TIP Report, Phillips had also claimed ignorance of and surprise at the issues raised in it until Pol/Econ Chief outlined for him Post's repeated and unsuccessful efforts - including in writing to MNS - urging the GOJ to engage with us to ensure that the 2004 TIP report accurately reflected any relevant GOJ efforts. Unfortunately, Phillips' continued public criticisms of the TIP report and his claims that its findings were "untrue" and "unfair" echo the tenor of many public statements made to date by defensive senior GOJ officials. Regrettable though the Minister's public posturing has been, however, with little time remaining before the G/TIP visit and the September 2 Presidential Determination, he seems fully seized with the issue. Without prejudging the eventual outcome, at this stage we are cautiously optimistic that the possibility of sanctions has focused the GOJ's attention on fulfilling the TIP Action Plan and establishing and maintaining a viable anti-TIP strategy. If the price for such an outcome is a bit of public ministerial disingenuousness, so be it. End Comment.

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